

471 institutions in a democratic society, such as the legislature, courts, labor boards and media of public opinion, are now agencies of the employer.

467 But even the alleged representatives of the workers—the Communist trade unions—are an arm of the same government-employer. Theoretically excluding any possibility of labor conflict, the Communist system has transformed the trade unions from organizations defending the workers' interests into governmental agencies enforcing official economic policy. In fact, ever since the creation of the Communist trade unions in Bulgaria, centralized in the General Workers Professional Union,²⁰ their main task has been to enact regulations concerning output, punishments against sabotage, labor discipline, higher norms, competitions, and to warn against wage increases, disorders and inefficiency in production.²¹ The Statute of the Trade Unions itself entrusts them with "mobilizing all workers and employees in the enterprises and offices for the fulfillment and overfulfillment of the production plan, strengthening of labor discipline, and developing of socialist competition."²²

A clear statement about what Bulgarian trade unions can and cannot do was published in the official union organ *Trud* shortly after the enactment of the Labor Code and the Trade Unions' Statute: "Due to the fact that the people's democratic state is one of the forms of the proletarian dictatorship . . . it is natural that the trade unions, which in the past were an enemy of the bourgeois state and the bourgeois structure, are today one of the main levers of the people's democratic state, first assistant of the Party in strengthening and leading to complete victory the socialist social structure. Therefore, it is now incorrect to speak in defense of the workers' and employees' interests, as it was in the past, and the trade unions do not and cannot have such a task . . . The basis for the activity of the trade unions in the people's democ-

²⁰ The General Workers Professional Union (*Oblast Rabotnicheski Profesionalen Soyuz*) is composed of individual trade unions which are organized according to the "production principle," that is, disregarding the workers' profession and taking into account the place of work only. The Statute of the Trade Unions, cited at footnote 9, is a carbon copy of the Soviet statute, the English translation of which is in Isaac Deutscher's work cited at footnote 1.

²¹ Cf. Ministry of Information and Arts, *The General Workers Professional Union* (Sofia: 1946), pp. 37-41, in English.

²² Art. 35(a).

²³ *Trud*, February 22, 1952.

²⁴ Resolution in Georgi Chankov, *Professionalite Soyuz i Tekhnicheskoto Znanie v Borбата na*

467 policy can be . . . their constantly teaching the working class that the only correct road is the organization of patriotic socialist competitions and the fulfillment of the state economic plans."²² And the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party²³ added that "the most important role of the trade unions in a proletarian dictatorship is their organizational-economic and educational role—their role as schools of communism."

It seems obvious that trade unions in a democratic country and their Communist counterpart have absolutely nothing in common except their name. In fact, their nature, functions and aims are diametrically opposed to each other. In Bulgaria, they are channels of the Communist government and can be best compared with an economic police force, operating in factories and other places where the economic plans of the government are being implemented.

How, then, is it at all possible to speak about collective bargaining, when the two contracting parties are, in last analysis, representatives of one and the same Communist state authority? Still, the Bulgarian Communists persist in using the term "collective" or "individual labor contract,"²⁴ although in theory as well as in practice they exclude any conflict-of-interest matters from contractual regulation. Following the Soviet example, even wages and standards of output are excluded as subjects of bargaining and reserved for exclusive governmental regulation. Wages in Communist Bulgaria are determined on the basis of "labor norms"—that is, production quotas—prescribed by the government for each category of workers. If a worker is not able to fulfill his norm, he is paid according to the quantity and quality of the finished product. This piece-work system is the antipode of the system of hourly wages and was banished in 1905 as a remnant of Turkish feudalism.²⁵ Thus, the Bulgarian Government is absolute master in decreeing all important labor

²² *Prosvetnitsvo na Socialisten v Nos* (Sofia: 1951), p. 88, in Bulgarian.

²³ Cf. Pt. II, Ch. I and II of the Code of Labor.

²⁴ Indicative of Communist hypocrisy is the fact that, before 1905, the Bulgarian Communists were bitter opponents of the piece-work system, even for shoemakers, denouncing it as "the most detestable exploitation by the hyenas of private capitalism." Ivan Iliev, *Radnitskoto Sindikalno Dvishenie v Bulgaria* (Sofia: 1927), p. 87, in Bulgarian. Communists everywhere, if out of power, violently oppose piece-work, yet introduce and hail it as "the most progressive achievement of the socialist state," once they take over.

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The Soviet trade unions generally supervise the carrying out of the plans for the construction of dwellings and communal buildings and take part in the distribution of new buildings to the workers, and in this connection their proposals have a decisive importance.—Leonid Nikolaevich Solovyov, Secretary, All-Union Central Council of Trades Unions, USSR.

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half an hour more than twice a month." It should be understood that the minimum consequence of a dismissal is labor mobilization.

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The following remarks of an authority on Soviet labor have full validity for Communist Bulgaria as well: "The fear of being late became a nightmare to workers, many of whom had no watches or clocks, and sent them speeding to work in frantic haste. The same fear made them gulp their lunch as quickly as possible." It sounds unbelievable that such a casual infraction as tardiness can ultimately lead to imprisonment or forced labor.

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As to inefficiency, the recently enacted Decree for Payment of Dead Time and Rejects in Industry, Construction and Transport^a supplemented the disciplinary punishments of the Labor Code by introducing financial liability for stoppage and defective output. The most unusual feature represents the fact that a worker is deprived of up to 30 per cent of his wage even if he is not responsible for the stoppage or defective output.^b

This Communist anomaly is even more clear in the provisions regulating the financial responsibility for damages caused to the enterprise. Guided by the principle that "socialist property" is more precious than

^a Grounds for dismissal in Art. 38 of the Labor Code.

^b Work by Schwarz, cited at footnote 1, p. 105.

^c *Izvestiya na Presidium na Narodnata Sobranie*, No. 32, April 21, 1953.

^d Art. 2 and 7 of the Decree for Payment of Dead Time and Rejects.

^e Cf. Arts. 1 and 51 of the Penal Code of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic (*Ugolovny Kodeks SSSR*, in Russian). Also, Arts. 1 and 21 of the Bulgarian Penal Code of 1951.

^f Art. 38 of the Labor Code.

^g Cf. Art. 2 of the Penal Code.

^h Art. 208, par. 2 of the Labor Code.

ⁱ This complete disregard for tradition and objective conditions has so much disorganized the national economy and antagonized the

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conditions of the alleged individual or collective "agreements," without any negotiation on the part of the workers. Actually, the "labor contract" represents a model form, prepared in advance by the government, and submitted for signature to the labor arm of the government—the trade union committee—thus legally binding all workers to a document in the formulation of which they have not at all participated.

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The secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Chankov, calls the labor contract an "economic-political document . . . a means for the mobilization of the working class for the fulfillment and overfulfillment of the plan" and frankly states that "the job of the trade unions with respect to the collective labor contracts by no means ends with the unions' task to sign the contracts. In fact, it starts only then. The most important aspect of their function is that, after the contracts have been signed, the trade unions exercise uninterrupted control and criticism of the administration of the contracts and mobilize the workers and employees for the contracts' fulfillment."²

It is obvious that those "contracts" represent nothing but a legally enforceable document with which the government imposes one-sided obligations upon the Bulgarian workers. The only consideration of the Communists in resorting to them seems to be their desire to give the outside world the impression of free labor relations within the Soviet orbit.

The provisions related to the settlement of labor disputes are also symptomatic in this respect. While using the term "labor disputes," the Bulgarian Communists not only shrink its subject matter to predominantly technical problems on the factory level, but also proclaim the supremacy of the executive over the judiciary in settling the disputes.³ In practice, the dispute seldom leaves the first stage, the so-called conciliatory commission, composed of the persons who signed the collective agreements and reflecting the identical source of authority—the Communist government. It seldom happens, therefore, that the representatives of the government-employer and of the government-controlled committee are allowed

² Work cited at footnote 24, pp. 54-55.

³ Cf. Pt. II, Ch. IX of the Code of Labor. Also, supplementary decrees in *Izvestiya na Presidiuma na Narodното Sobranie*, Nos. 35, May 9, 1952, and 47, June 3, 1952. Art. 143 of the Code, in particular, prohibits appeals to conciliation boards and courts for disputes involving disciplinary punishments or dismissal by the trade union or the governmental authority.

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656 to disagree on the settlement of a labor dispute. If they should, the last word is explicitly reserved for the executive.

The collapse of collective bargaining and the regimentation of the labor force have restricted labor relations to technical questions and have transformed labor law into a means for enforcing governmental policy. The key institution of the Communist system vis-à-vis labor has become the so-called socialist discipline of labor.

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656 "Socialist labor discipline" represents a system of rules affecting the conduct of the workers in any Communist enterprise, office or organization. Its aim is to increase production and productivity of labor without any particular regard to the real capacities of the national economy and of the labor force, including the individual worker. Within the limits of a governmentally recruited, directed and controlled labor force, "socialist labor discipline" embraces all regulations enacted by the Communist administration of every establishment which fix the specific obligations of the workers. In short, it is the regime under which the worker must perform his daily work, to which he is assigned and which he cannot leave.

It has been said that labor remuneration in Communist Bulgaria is based on the piece-work system. Accordingly, the primary requirement of the administration is that the worker fulfill his daily norm in order to get his full wage. But since norms are established by the State Institute for Labor Norms on the basis of the capacity of 5 to 10 per cent of the most productive workers, the remaining 90 to 95 per cent are driven to catch up by the rigorous labor discipline."

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671 The only possible way to reach the norm is to work more. That is why Article 43 of the Labor Code announces a "nonfixed working day" and Article 46(a) to (f) allows overtime work for a variety of purposes, in spite of general provisions to the contrary in Articles 39 and 43. The Decree for Overtime Work² dispels possible doubts by stating, in its Article 11, that "workers and employees cannot refuse . . . to perform overtime work. If they think that the imposed overtime work is unlawful, they

ties. In such cases the worker or employee may only appeal to higher administrative authorities.

² Cf. Leland Stowe, *Conquest by Terror* (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 125. While norms are constantly revised and increased, wages remain almost the same, so that, in 1961 alone, there was an automatic wage reduction of up to 25 per cent (p. 136).

³ Text of decree in *Trud*, May 15, 1962.

RETROSPECT, 1948

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As soon as I began to understand what was happening in Dragalevtsy I knew that I was in touch with something tremendously important. Here, in a Bulgarian village which I had once known intimately, I was encountering the same peasant reactions which I had found in many parts of Yugoslavia, a country which also was experiencing political and social upheaval. The Yugoslavs had a National Liberation Front under Tito which paralleled Bulgaria's Fatherland Front under Georgi Dimitrov. Throughout Serbia, in Dalmatia, Croatia, and parts of the Vojvodina I heard Yugoslav peasants complaining about their new regime in the same overtones and undertones as did my Dragalevtsy friends.

What was there about the Communist-dominated governments that the peasants did not like? It was not until I had left the Balkans, and was weatherbound in Vienna, that I had time to formulate the reasons. Some of these have already been mentioned in the discussion of postwar change in Dragalevtsy, but they can be accurately applied to those other parts in the Balkans where landed peasants are the rule.

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The Communists are aware of the peasant's hunger for more land and have instituted land reforms to bring about a greater mass ownership of the farming areas, on the principle that "the land belongs to those who till it." But in the case of those who have land, even in quantities small enough not to be affected by the reform laws, the governments have given little assurance that the land will remain private property for an indefinite period. Constitutions guarantee this, to be sure, but constitutions mean little to many authoritarian regimes. The greatest insecurity in the rural Balkans today, as previously pointed out in the case of Dragalevtsy, is the ever-present threat that one's land may sooner or later be taken over by the state and operated as a government holding. Part of the Communist policy may be the promotion of this uncertainty on the theory that insecure people are more easily controlled. But when one tampers

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with a relationship as deep-rooted as that of the Balkan peasant to his land, he is also creating the seeds out of which a spontaneous resistance movement could grow. There is little evidence of collectivization at present, but the peasants are not convinced that it is not just around the corner.

Then too, the Balkan peasants, especially in the settled agricultural areas, have not taken kindly to Communism because they characterize it as an urban movement. When seasoned Communists try to converse with peasants about the merits of the Russian system their factory-oriented dialectic falls flat. Nor have they developed an agricultural vocabulary with which to communicate intelligibly with the rural people. The more the Balkan Communists talk, the more the peasants are convinced of the urban orientation of the new government. They consider it anti-Agrarian and anti-peasant. In an attempt to overcome this reserve to their program the Communists organize deputation teams of artisans who spend Sundays out in carefully selected villages helping the peasants repair their wagons, mend their pots and pans, or they even bring along a corps of barbers to cut the villagers' hair. The spirit behind such a move is to have the artisans show by their deeds, "You see, we are your friends. We're all brother Bulgarians [or Yugoslavs, as the case may be]." But it takes more than this to sell such a radical program as Communism to the capitalistic-minded peasant.

The rural villagers elsewhere in the Balkans, as well as in Dragalevtsy, resent the term worker. Newspapers studiously attempt to get the worker ideology accepted by the rural citizens, but the social statuses of the peasant and the worker are such that the government is asking the former to step down a rung, in the peasant's estimation. So Communism is thought to represent a backward rather than a forward move, and is related to the all-important matter of land: the peasant generally possesses it, whereas the worker is usually landless.

Many analyses of the Balkan problems play up rightly the role of the church, whether it be Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic, in the peasants' lack of enthusiasm for Communism. Others stress the generations-old nationality antipathies which have some influence. Certainly Pan-Slavism is not paying high dividends in rural areas in

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The administration [vocational rehabilitation] program provides that during 1955, 70 thousand persons would be rehabilitated, 100 thousand in 1956, and the number would be progressively increased until 1959 some 200 thousand disabled persons would be rehabilitated and returned to useful work.—James P. Mitchell

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right of freedom on the job and a legal principle requesting mutual consent for any modification of existing conditions."

The check upon the workers' movement is performed via so-called "personal passports" and "workbooks." The first, issued by the police and the second by the first employer are labelled "official documents" and must be presented on request. According to the provisions of the Labor Code, as well as of the special Decree for Workbooks," every worker is required to present his workbook, in order to be eligible for any kind of job. The book contains the whole employment record and, specifically, "the reason for the discontinuation" of a previous job." It is kept by the employer and is aimed primarily at the prevention of arbitrary quitting.

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Before discussing the core of labor relations—collective bargaining—it is important to recall the main characteristics of the parties between which the bargaining is supposed to take place. Due to the complete disappearance of private ownership in industry, the one and only owner and employer in Bulgaria is the Communist state. And bargaining with the state, even if duly protected, is always burdensome, especially when such protection is entirely lacking. In fact, Bulgaria's form of government being that of a dictatorship of the proletariat; that is, "a power limited by nothing . . . directly based on violence,"¹ and the sole repository of power being the Communist Party and government, all protective in-

¹ *Investiga na Presidiuma na Narodnoto Sobranie*, Year IV, No. 14, February 17, 1953.

² The Bulgarian Communists themselves seem to have been embarrassed by the shockingly frank language of the Stability Law (cf. author's study cited at footnote 3, p. 20, quoting speech by Vice-President Yugov), so that they repealed it nine months later (*Investiga na Presidiuma na Narodnoto Sobranie*, Year IV, No. 20, November 10, 1953). No change in the actual situation has been reported, however.

³ *Investiga na Presidiuma na Narodnoto Sobranie*, Year IV, No. 26, March 31, 1953.

⁴ Art. 17, par. 2 of the Labor Code, and Art. 6 (g) of the Decree for Workbooks.

⁵ See footnote 6.

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³ Art. 35(a).

⁴ *Trud*, February 22, 1952.

⁵ Resolution in Georgi Chankov, *Professionalite Soglas i Tekhnicheski Zadrzhi v Borбата na*